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ABSTRACT

Studies of U.S. history in middle school usually focus on the British point of view of the growth and development of the United States. This curriculum project aims to foster a bi-national perspective to compare and contrast issues reflecting the influences of Spain and Mexico on the indigenous cultures of both countries, with a specific focus on the Luiseno tribe in San Diego (California) and the Tarahumara Indians of Copper Canyon in Mexico. The project outlines four learning objectives for students, suggests strategies to help students achieve these objectives, and provides discussion questions to assist students in considering the material studied. A list of materials used in the project is also provided. (BT)

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Curriculum Project for Fulbright-Hays Program: The Indigenous Cultures and the Influences of Spain and Mexico.

by

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1999 Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar Abroad Program
Mexico

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8th Grade
United States History

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CURRICULUM PROJECT FOR FULBRIGHT-HAYS PROGRAM

The Indigenous Cultures and the Influences of Spain and Mexico

Background:

Studies of American History in middle school usually focus on the British point of view of the growth and development of the United States. The textbooks take this approach. Only during the westward expansion and the Mexican American War are Spain and Mexico belatedly introduced as landholders in the west. Many Anglo students have not been exposed to another nation's viewpoint and have an "isolationism perspective" concerning the United States and regional history. Students, including Hispanic, are generally surprised when they realize that the southwestern third of the United States was once the northern half of Mexico. California retains the historical and cultural legacies of the Spanish colonial system and the early Mexican nation. The approach of this project is to foster a bi-national perspective to compare and contrast issues concerning the influences of Spain and Mexico on the indigenous cultures of both countries, with a specific focus on the Luiseno tribe in San Diego and the Tarahumara Indians of Copper Canyon in Mexico. The desired

outcome is that students' awareness will be enhanced to understand that prior to the physical border between the United States/California and Mexico, the history of the San Diego region had many similarities to Mexico until the Americans arrived. It is important to allow students to make connections to the Spanish and Mexican influences in the regional area and draw larger national conclusions when studying Manifest Destiny and the Mexican American War. By focusing on indigenous tribes and tracing the Spanish colonization and Mexican influences that occurred on both sides of the border, students will be aware of the culture that transcends the physical line that separates the two countries. Hopefully it will foster positive understanding of the Mexican culture that sometimes gets lost in political debates in California concerning border issues and immigration policies.

Within the United States and Mexico, indigenous cultures resided long before the encounters with Europeans. In both Southern California and Mexico, the first encounters were with the Spanish. On the eastern seaboard of the United States the encounters, however, were primarily with the English which set in motion different cultural influences. Prior to contact, in the land now known as the United States, there were 500 distinct tribes. At the time of Spanish conquest in San Diego County in the mid-1700's there were four distinct tribes, the Luiseno, the Kumeyaay, the Cupeno, and the Cahilla. At the time of Spanish conquest in Mexico in the early 1500's, there were more than 100 discrete ethnic groups. In 1570 there were approximately three and a half million indigenous people.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Students will have an overview of indigenous peoples in San Diego County and Mexico to analyze the commonalities and differences of exposure to the conquering cultures of Spain and Mexico

2. Students will be exposed to artifacts, both historical and contemporary, from indigenous peoples from Mexico and Southern California

3. Students will research and gather information on historic and contemporary Mexican Indian tribes (Tarahumara, Aztec, Mayan, Zapotec, etc.) and those of San Diego County (Kumeyaay and Luiseno)

4. Students will design and paint a mural, in the Diego Rivera fashion, to incorporate the Spanish and Mexican influences on the indigenous peoples both in San Diego and Mexico

STRATEGIES:

OBJECTIVE 1: Students will have an overview of some indigenous peoples in San Diego County and Mexico to analyze the commonalities and differences of exposure to the conquering cultures of Spain and Mexico

1. In small groups, students will read primary and secondary source materials and find examples of early Spanish descriptions about the indigenous peoples. Those materials include The Conquest of Mexico, Bernal Diaz del Castillo; Spanish Exploration in the Southwest 1542-1706 (including Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo's Voyage in 1542 and Sebastian Vizcano voyages of San Diego) and The Legacy of the Luiseno.

Discussion Questions:

What were the recorded descriptions of the Spanish concerning the indigenous peoples of Mexico and California?

Was there any difference in comments from the Spanish concerning the indigenous peoples in Mexico as opposed to what was recorded about the California Indians?

What were the primary goals of the Spanish in conquering the indigenous peoples?

In what ways did the Spanish "conquer" the tribes (notably the Aztecs) in Mexico?

2. Almost two hundred years later the Spanish focused their attention on colonizing California and San Diego County by building missions and presidios. "The Spanish missionaries believed that effective Christianization (of the Indians) could not be separated from the larger process of acculturation. Their aim was to bring about a rapid transformation of the native peoples. The Indians were to be Hispanicized at the missions not only in religion, but also in social organization, language, dress, and work habits. The Missions of California were missions at which the Indians were 'reduced' from their 'free, undisciplined' state to become regulated and disciplined members of Spanish colonial society. In addition to transforming the way of life of the California Indians, the missions also inadvertently contributed to their destruction. During the mission period, the native population of California declined dramatically. Much of the decline was caused by the introduction of new diseases for which the Indians lacked immunity." (James Rawls, Indians of California: The Changing Image, 1984 p. 14-21).

Students will be shown photographs of the Mission San Luis Rey in Oceanside, the San Diego Mission, and slides from the Spanish colonial monasteries in Mexico, showing original wall paintings used to convert the Indians. Photographs of the interior of churches in Mexico will show immense golden altars and foyers while the "side" chapels were austere and reserved only for the Indians. In addition, pictures will be shown of the Spanish

churches in Mexico built on top of older Indian pyramids, their sacred places of worship.

Discussion Questions:

What role did the Catholic Church play in the lives of the Indians in San Diego and Mexico?
What was the purpose of the Spanish building their churches on the tops of Indian pyramids?
In the photographs, what was did the painted message intend to convey to the Indians of Mexico?
How are the early colonial Spanish monasteries physically similar to the California missions? Why were they built and what activities occured on the grounds?
What evidence is still noted in the San Diego community and Mexican community that shows the Spanish religious influence?
Did the lack of Spanish manpower have an effect on the tribes in San Diego in the mid-1700's as opposed to those tribes in Mexico during the early 1500's?

3. Two particular tribes will be studied for an in-depth focus, the Luiseno Indians of San Diego County and the Tarahumara Indians of the Copper Canyon region of Mexico. An elder from the Luiseno tribe will share his point of view as an Indian of Luiseno and Mexican descent. With slides and presented information, students will analyze the information and understand how the Spanish, Mexican and American influences changed the

Luiseno society (The Legacy of the Luiseno) and how the Spanish and Mexican influences (Mexico's Copper Canyon: The Sierra Tarahumara) are felt in the Tarahumara society. In many ways the Luiseno have become assimilated into the American society even though they live on the reservation. All speak English, drive cars, have modern conveniences in their homes, and most have jobs outside the reservation. Their children go to public schools off the reservation. However, a few still retain their indigenous language and some of their traditional ceremonies are still practiced. The Tarahumara reside in a remote area of Mexico. The majority of homes have no electricity and phones; food is sometimes scarce. Some men have left the village to work in town (Creel) at the sawmill. Many traditional ceremonies are still practiced and some of the children attend a boarding school nearby, mostly to have good meals and clothing. Language is important to the survival of the culture in the transmitting of ceremonies and oral traditions. The Luiseno have only a few native speakers left (since they had to learn Spanish and English) while the Tarahumara speak their native tongue, although some have learned Spanish.

Discussion Questions:

Are there any similarities of these two tribes? Differences? What if the Americans never arrived in Southern California and no border was created? How might the indigenous tribes on both sides of the border be the same? different?

How might the Luiseno be different today if they resided on the

Mexican side of the border, considering the mountainous regions where they currently live? How do you think their society would compare in regards to the Tarahumara?
In what ways does the geographic region and retention of the native language help or hinder the survival of the culture?
In what ways does a physical border separate cultures?

4. After Independence from Mexico, in 1850 Governor Burnett of California told the State Legislature that "a war of extermination will continue to be waged between the races until the Indian race becomes extinct." He felt it was "the inevitable destiny of this race." Former President Lazaro Cardenas of Mexico stated that "We must mexicanize the Indians instead of indianize Mexico."

Discussion Questions:
What do these statements mean?
Do you agree with these policies, why or why not?
How have the lives of Indians in both countries been affected by these policies?

OBJECTIVE 2:

Students will be exposed to artifacts, both historical and contemporary, from indigenous peoples from Mexico and Southern California

1. Rugs, pottery, art, baskets from different tribes, will be discussed and previewed by the students. Similarities and differences will be noted by geographic region and culture. Students will learn how to make a pot or a figurine in the indigenous ways by digging the clay and working through the steps to duplicate the art piece in the original way.

Discussion Questions:

In what ways are the artifacts similar or different?
Does the physical border of the United States/Mexico define the artifacts: Can you identify the artifact as "Mexican" or "American?" Why or why not?

OBJECTIVE 3:

Students will research and gather information on historic and contemporary Mexican Indian tribes (Tarahumara, Aztec, Mayan, Zapotec, etc.) and those of San Diego County (specifically, Kumeyaay and Luiseno)

1. Research materials will be provided for students to gather information on Mexican and Southern California tribes. Posters will be presented and students will note the similarities and

differences of the tribes by region during class presentations.

Discussion questions:

Drawing on the information from the previous lessons, what contemporary physical, social, and cultural aspects from the Spanish/Mexican influences are still seen in San Diego?
Why has the culture remained?
How has the culture changed from the indigenous beginnings?

OBJECTIVE 4: (ASSESSMENT)

Students will design and paint a mural, in the Diego Rivera fashion, to incorporate and express the Spanish and Mexican influences on the indigenous peoples both in San Diego and Mexico

1. Students will be taught the elements of a mural including size, shape, and media used.
2. Students will be shown a variety of murals, some from El Paso, another border city in Texas, and will be asked what images and symbols are shown and what are the artists' intentions and meanings of the murals.
3. Highlights from Diego Rivera's biography will be discussed. Pictures and postcards will be shown of his mural work in Mexico and that in the United States. Students will observe his painting style and find reoccurring symbols in his murals and discuss his messages.
4. Students will use the information gathered in this project about indigenous peoples in San Diego and Mexico to create

symbols and statements to be incorporated into a large mural, similar in style to that of Diego Rivera.

Materials Used In Project:

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